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Identical letters dated 20 January 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I am instructed by my Government to bring the following to your attention.

As the armed conflict in Syria continues unabated in its seventh year, the spillover effects of the war have exceeded the borders of Syria and its immediate vicinity. The terrorist organizations that have found fertile ground remain a serious threat to regional and international security, as well as to the territorial integrity of Syria.

The national security of Turkey has been under direct threat from the Syria-based terrorist organizations, among which Deash and the PKK/KCK Syria affiliate, PYD/YPG, are at the top of the list.

In countering the threat of terrorism, our response has always been proportionate, measured and in line with the right of self-defence, as defined in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations.

Accordingly, Turkey successfully concluded Operation Euphrates Shield last year, through which 2,015 km^2 of land was cleared of Deash and a safe haven free of terror could be established, which enabled some of the displaced Syrians to return safely and voluntarily to their homes.

However, the threat of terrorism from Syria targeting our borders has not ended. The recent increase in rocket attacks and harassment fire directed at Hatay and Kilis provinces of Turkey from the Afrin region of Syria, which is under the control of the PKK/KCK/PYD/YPG terrorist organization, has resulted in the deaths of many civilians and soldiers and has left many more wounded.

The risk of Deash elements infiltrating Turkey via this area and targeting the security of Turkey as well as the European countries is also heightened owing to the recent movements of Deash terrorists coming into the Afrin region from other parts of Syria.

In order to counter this terrorist threat, Turkey initiated a military operation on 20 January 2018 against these terrorist elements. The operation is aimed at ensuring our border security, neutralizing terrorists in Afrin and saving the brotherly Syrians. Accordingly, the operation will target only terrorists and their hideouts, shelters, emplacements, weapons, vehicles and equipment. All precautions have been taken to avoid collateral damage.

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This measure was essential in order to ensure the border security of Turkey and our national security based on our right of self-defence, as defined in Article 51 of the Charter, but also within the context of the responsibility attributed to Member States in the fight against terrorism, including through Security Council resolutions 1373 (2001), 1624 (2005), 2170 (2014) and 2178 (2014).

I would like to underline that Turkey, which is unequivocally committed to the territorial integrity and political unity of Syria, is undertaking this measure with a view to contributing to and furthering these basic principles.

Turkey remains staunchly committed to finding a political solution to the conflict in Syria through a genuine political transition, as outlined in the Geneva communique and Security Council resolution 2254 (2015), and will continue its dauntless efforts to make this a reality as soon as possible.

I would be grateful if the text of the present letter could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Güven **Begeç**
Deputy Permanent Representative
Chargé d'affaires a.i.